

UMI Number: 3050412

UMI<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3050412

Copyright 2002 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

PREVIEW

MATERIALIZING THE SPIRITUAL: CHRISTIANITY, COMMUNITY, AND  
HISTORY IN A PHILIPPINE LANDSCAPE

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Smita Lahiri  
May 2002

PREVIEW

© 2002 Smita Lahiri

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Smita Lahiri was born on September 16, 1970 to Indian diplomats stationed in Nairobi, Kenya. She spent her childhood living with her family in the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, and the U.S.A., and attended high school at Sardar Patel Vidyalaya in New Delhi, and at Whitney Young High School in Chicago. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College with a major in philosophy in 1992, but her experience of working on rural development in the Indian state of Bihar turned her interests in the direction of anthropology. She entered Cornell's graduate program in anthropology in 1993. In 1998 she married John Gibson and is currently living in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people's kindness, wisdom, enthusiasm, and support were integral to the completion of this dissertation. First of all, I would like to thank my doctoral committee chair, James T. Siegel, since I cannot imagine having come this far without his steady encouragement, moral support, and intellectual vision. In particular, he never failed to identify interesting, elusive, and important issues lurking below the surface of what I might otherwise have taken for granted. This is equally true of my other senior committee member, Benedict Anderson, who is not only one of the most riveting and inspiring teachers I have ever had, but is also largely responsible (along with Joshua Barker) for my having decided to study the Philippines.

I also wish to thank Theodore S. Bestor, whose generosity and sharp insights as a Japan specialist provided a much-valued complement to the Southeast Asian perspectives that tended to dominate my thinking. Similarly, Andrew S. Willford's probing feedback and wide-ranging reading suggestions were of great help to me, and his own example in bridging South and Southeast Asian studies have offered me a model to which to aspire. Jennifer Krier's invaluable support and advice as I prepared to go the field will never be forgotten. And Fenella Cannell has been both an informal advisor and a friend, starting with early stages of my graduate career, and continuing through fieldwork and dissertation-writing. Thinking back on our many conversations--on Philippine studies, Catholicism, Southeast Asian studies and our respective research, amongst many other topics-- never fails to remind me how much I owe her, both as an anthropologist and as a Philippinist.

A number of my undergraduate teachers also deserve thanks, especially Wyatt MacGaffey, who set me on the road to becoming an anthropologist; Aryeh Kosman

and Danielle Macbeth, who taught me how to recognize philosophical questions; Ivan Fox, who went out of his way to help me even though he ultimately failed to save me from the social sciences; and David Ludden, whose seminar in South Asian history at the University of Pennsylvania convinced me that I wanted to go to graduate school.

The faculty and students of Cornell's anthropology department, my institutional home for the last eight years, have taught me a great deal about anthropology and collegiality. The friendly feedback and sustenance (culinary as well as intellectual) of the dissertation writers group made the long, slow process of writing-up easier and much more fun: many thanks to Thamora Fishel, Sara Friedman, Erick White, Julie Hemment, Susan Hangen, Larry Barnett, Neriko Musha Doerr, and Robert Philen. I am also grateful to other friends in the department for stimulating discussions and advice: Joshua Barker and Hjoirleifur Jonsson come especially to mind. (By introducing me to my husband, John Gibson, Leif has placed me even further in his debt.)

The Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) at Cornell introduced me to the challenges and pleasures of sustained intellectual and personal involvement in that part of the world. I have learned a tremendous amount from many SEAP students and affiliates, amongst whom I would like to mention Andrew Abalihin, Thamora Fishel (again), Carol Hau, Lotta Hedman, Kari Grotterud, Deirdre de la Cruz, Amanda Rath, Erick White (again), Sumit Mandal, Kyaw Yin Hlaing, and Megan Thomas. The excellent Tagalog instruction of Dr. John U. Wolff and Emily Graw prepared me to get the most out of my research, and the convivial atmosphere of the Kahin Center, where I spent so much time, would not have been the same without Deborah Homsher and Penny Dietrich.

My doctoral fieldwork, conducted in two phases (March 1997 to July 1998 and March 2000 to June 2000), was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for

Anthropological Research. Travel grants from the Cornell Graduate School and the Einaudi Center of Cornell University supplemented the generous support of Wenner-Gren, and are gratefully acknowledged. My research in the Philippines was greatly facilitated by the Institute for Philippine Culture (IPC) at Ateneo de Manila University, where I was affiliated as a Visiting Research Associate between 1997 and 2000. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the IPC, particularly Dr. Gernelino Bautista, Dr. Mary Racelis and Jeanne Frances Illo. Indeed, it was an invitation by Dr. Mary Racelis to visit Southern Luzon with her that led to my conducting fieldwork at Mt. Banahaw. While affiliated with Ateneo, I greatly benefitted from the opportunity to meet colleagues in the world of Philippine studies, including Nicholas Barker, Peter Braunlein, and Raul Pertierra. The only sadness connected to this period was caused by the untimely death of Carmencita Mendez of the IPC, whose kindly assistance I will always remember and appreciate.

I am grateful to the administrators and staff of the Philippine National Archives, the Archives of the Franciscan parish of San Pedro Bautista, the Lopez Memorial Library, and the libraries of the University of the Philippines and the University of Santo Tomas for permission to conduct research in their collections. Thanks also to Philomeno Redor, Jr., for sharing with me some of his insights into Tayabas history.

Many people extended warmth and generosity towards me during my stay in the Philippines. The success of an exploratory trip I made to the Philippines in 1995 was largely due to the hospitality, help and companionship of the family of Dominique Caouette, the Sandilyas, Jeanne Illo, and Nick Salting. During my fieldwork, I was lucky to receive the hospitality of exceptionally generous friends. Bhuvan Bhatnagar and Mariam Pal each opened their respective Manila homes to me, insuring that I always had a comfortable base from which to do library research or simply take a break



from the challenges of fieldwork. Florentina Tan invited me into her home and family in Manila, and arranged for me to stay with her relatives in Quezon, including Mrs. Cadiz in Sariaya.

One of the people who taught me the most about Mt. Banahaw (and much else besides) is Sylvia Mayuga, whose frank honesty, quirky wisdom and eloquence I came to admire greatly. The staff and volunteers of the Luntiang Alyansa para sa Bundok Banahaw (LABB) and CO-TRAIN accepted me as a *kasama* and were always ready to offer help, whether I needed office services, help with living arrangements in Sariaya or Dolores, or a sympathetic listener. Tirso Lontok, Jr., Ravenal Dejarne, Jay Lim, Eddie Mendoza, Jane Austria and Luz Malabanan taught me much of what I know about Southern Luzon, and I hope they will excuse my gaffes and mistakes.

Some of my most enjoyable moments of fieldwork at Mt. Banahaw were spent with Francis Marquez and Renato Siy, through whom I gained insight into the lives of latter-day *namumundok*. In Dolores, Ravenal Dejarne and his family accepted me into their family, as did the Bujaktins (especially Abigail) and Mrs. Gregoria Mendoza in Santa Lucia. I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Rosa Palau and all the members of Camara Baja for letting me join their community and for sharing their devotions and beliefs with me. A big *salamat po* to Eddie and Linda Mendoza and their four daughters for making me so welcome in their home. I am similarly grateful to Ystanislaw Manalo and his wife Virgencita for their close friendship, and to Ysing in particular for his knowledgeable and diligent research assistance. A great many people at Mt. Banahaw were unstintingly generous and patient with my questions and the demands I made upon their time, I thank them all.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Shobhana and Dilip, my sister, Tripti, and my husband, John, for all their love, encouragement and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	viii
Chapter 1. Introduction: Culture, Class, and Catholicism in the Postcolonial Philippines . . . . .	1
Chapter 2. Space, Memory, and the Location of Authority in a Tagalog Landscape . . . . .	61
Chapter 3. Alluding to Orthodoxy: Viewing Filipino Folk-Catholicism from Mt. Banahaw . . . . .	116
Chapter 4. Redrawing the Margin: Folk-Religious Sects and Popular Nationalism . . . . .	186
Chapter 5. Joining the Elect: The Politics of the Spiritual in Santa Lucia . . . . .	240
Chapter 6. Conclusion: Remembering Nationally, Forgetting Locally . . . . .	288
Bibliography	322

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: CULTURE, CLASS, AND CATHOLICISM IN THE POSTCOLONIAL PHILIPPINES

Stretching down the length of Luzon like a broken spine, the Sierra Madre range is home to three of the most fabled of Philippine mountains: Mt. Banahaw on the border of Laguna and Quezon provinces, Mt. Makiling in Laguna, and Mt. Arayat in Bulacan. These three peaks are popularly known as the “Three Marys,” but unlike the women who wept over the body of Jesus Christ as it was taken down from the cross, Maria Banahaw, Maria Makiling and Maria Sinukuan are popularly conceptualized as sisters.<sup>1</sup> As in other parts of the Malay world, features of the Philippine landscape are often personified, endowed with symbolism, and viewed in relation to each other as nodes in a sacred geography. Without doubt, Banahaw is the most renowned of the three siblings. Not only does it serve as the home base of several small religious sects unaffiliated with the Catholic Church, but it is also the destination of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos making unofficial pilgrimages at Easter time. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday in particular, the slopes of Banahaw teem with people tracing a circuit of caves and springs which recall Christ’s passion and the road to Calvary, and stopping by other natural shrines to pay their respects to the Virgin Mary and the saints in their many aspects.

Over my first few months of research I often heard it said that “Banahaw is the heart of the Philippines” and was struck by hearing many pilgrims speak of Banahaw as

---

<sup>1</sup>As in Philippine society, however, there is some ambiguity about which bonds of kinship take precedence over others: in another, not necessarily contradictory “familial” construction, Mt. Banahaw is conceptualized as the benevolent, female partner of her adjacent male peak, the menacing Mt. San Cristobal.

though it were some kind of touchstone or emblem of the Philippines, as significant in its own way as the national capital. Another saying, which I heard less frequently, is perhaps even more illuminating: “If Manila is the heart of the Philippines, than Banahaw is its navel” (*kung Maynila ay puso ng Pilipinas, e di ang pusod ay Banahaw*). The euphony of “puso” (heart) and “pusod” (navel) within the sentence reinforces the equivalence being claimed for the two centers, Manila and Banahaw, an equivalence which derives ultimately from Philippine bio-cosmology. In cultural terms, the heart is recognized to be the center of one’s life-force without which survival is unthinkable, while the navel is the considered the cosmological center of one’s being—the source not only of placental nourishment, life and kin identity, but also of that ineffaceable indebtedness of child to parent that is quintessentially part of the human condition. To push this analogy even further, its message might be construed as follows: while Manila is clearly the center of the body politic, actively pumping life-blood to the Philippines’ extremities through arterial highways, Banahaw too deserves to be recognized as a sign of the Philippines’ origins and the repository of traces of its primordial affiliations and identity.

This might be altogether too far-fetched an interpretation of a casual saying, were it not for the fact that one finds “Manila” (represented by its celebrities, political and otherwise) paying homage to Banahaw in just this fashion. “Places like Banahaw are truly necessary to either awaken or strengthen within human consciousness the importance of reciprocity between nature and humanity” writes one contributor to *Banahaw: Conversations With a Pilgrim to the Power Mountain*, a compact and copiously-illustrated art book compiled by a Jesuit theologian and professor at Ateneo de Manila, Vitaliano S. Gorospe. In the same volume, Fr. Gorospe explains: “From pre-Hispanic times, Banahaw has always been a spiritual center — a geological dynamo

that radiates an intense vortex of energy[. . .]Banahaw is a mysterious place because it attracts mystics and those who in one way or another are searching for God, or contact with the divine” (1989, 17).

Father Gorospe’s assertion is not an isolated instance of special regard for the mountain: during the eighteen months I spent conducting research in the Philippines I came across various signs indicating that a belief in Banahaw’s mystical significance is common not just among ordinary pilgrims, most of whom are poor or lower-middle class, but amongst socially prominent individuals. For instance I witnessed a prominent Presidential candidate making not one but two campaign visits to Mt. Banahaw during the months prior to the 1998 national elections (which he lost). During the many months when I participated in the daily rituals and routine of Camara Baja (Lower Chamber), a Banahaw-based spiritual sect, I often studied the commemorative photographs mounted upon the walls of the group’s main meeting hall. The photograph which never failed to draw my attention depicted the unmistakable and heavily made-up figure of the former first lady Imelda Marcos assuming a kneeling position in front of Camara Baja’s main altar, where she appeared to be undergoing a “baptism” presided over by the group’s leader, a middle-aged Chinese-Filipina lady named Rosa Palau who is better known as “Mama Rose.” Despite her formidable connections, Mama Rose is a relative newcomer to Mt. Banahaw (she founded Camara Baja in the early 1980s) and is by no means its pre-eminent spiritual figure. That distinction belongs to Isabel Suarez, the sexagenarian “Suprema” of Suprema Iglesia de la Ciudad Mistica de Dios (Supreme Church of the Mistical City of God), a sect which was founded in the 1930s on the distant island of Mindoro. Its headquarters were transferred to Mt Banahaw in the 1950s by Amador Suarez (Isabel’s father), who served as the group’s director or Supremo until his death in 1980, and who is widely

said to have dispensed spiritual advice and magical amulets to no less a figure than Ferdinand Marcos himself. This kind of gossip circulates not just at Mt. Banahaw but also in Manila, where information about the legendary mountain is not hard to find. Those curious about the place can, for instance, peruse the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* for feature articles about “paranormal” phenomena at Mt. Banahaw by the Philippines’ best-known psychic Jaime Licaucó, or listen to the album of songs about Banahaw composed and performed by the well-known folk-singer Joey Ayala.

In part because of the attraction it exerts on celebrities and other powerful people whose doings call attention to themselves, Mt. Banahaw’s mystical reputation figures in the popular imagination of most Filipinos. But those with some exposure to Filipino history as taught in schools and universities are likely to think of Mt. Banahaw in somewhat different terms: as the haunt of bandits, fugitives, rebels and religious “fanatics” who challenged and eluded first Spanish and then U.S. colonial authorities at the turn of the twentieth century. When the Philippine revolution against Spain broke out in 1896 under the leadership of urban conspirators and provincial elites, the Tagalog-speaking provinces just north and south of Manila were amongst its staunchest supporters. While the town centers ringing Mt. Banahaw were periodically the scene of stand-offs between revolutionary and state forces struggling for control of the citadels of state and religious authority, the hills themselves became an ongoing theater of guerilla warfare and a home base where the revolutionaries hid out with the help of the aid and information covertly provided them by the local populace. The revolutionaries received a particularly enthusiastic response from the Kolorum, a small religious confraternity drawn from the ranks of the peasantry in the provinces surrounding Mt. Banahaw. The Kolorum conflated *kalayaan* (“freedom”) or the revolutionary goal of political independence with its own visions of salvation and the

coming of an earthly paradise.<sup>2</sup> Even following U.S. intervention and the surrender of Emilio Aguinaldo, president of the short-lived Philippine republic, to the invading forces in 1898, revolutionary generals in the Mt. Banahaw area stubbornly fought on with the support of the local populace until they were brutally stamped-out by American forces led by General Bell, whose “scorched earth” policy was later condemned by the U.S. Congress.<sup>3</sup>

While these details may tend to recede from memory (as is often the case with the history one learns at school), to generations of Filipinos educated since independence in 1946 Mt. Banahaw remains identified with staunch patriotism and defense of the motherland (*Inangbayan*). It appears as one of a handful of bright spots in a national history whose dominant narrative is otherwise one of ignominious

---

<sup>2</sup> On the Kolorum’s activities in the Mt. Banahaw area during and after the Philippine Revolution, the best source is Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979), chapters 3, 4, and 5; Tagalog readers should also consult Ramos (1992) and Navarro and Palad (1998). While references to the Kolorum are scattered across local administrative records prior to 1896 and in U.S. military archival documents after 1898, two of the most important sources of information about the group consist of personal accounts by Filipino elites who participated in the revolution; see Santiago V. Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution: Memoirs of a General*, trans. Paula Carolina S. Malay (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992 [1927-28]), and Telesforo Canseco, “Historia de la insurreccion filipina en Cavite,” excerpted in *Readings in Philippine Church History*, ed. John Schumacher (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1978), 272-4.

<sup>3</sup> For a contemporary account condemning the violent “pacification” of Southern Luzon and other areas by U.S. forces, see James H. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913). Recent historical accounts of how American forces overcame local resistance to U.S. occupation include that of John Morgan Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags* (Ct: Greenwood, 1972), Chapters 8 and 9, and Brian Linn, *The United States Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1989), Chapter 5.

collaboration with colonial rulers. As a rural locality with a starring role in national narratives of Filipino identity, it is not surprising that Mt. Banahaw is a frequent destination on educational group trips from schools, colleges and convents. Aside from the intrinsic interest of the place, it also helps that modern transportation and paved roads have transformed it from a remote rural outpost, one which took anywhere from twelve to eighteen hours to reach from Manila late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to an easily-made day trip which can take as little as two hours drive each way.

My research was conducted over eighteen months between 1997 and 2000 in the municipality of Dolores, on the south-facing slope of Mt. Banahaw. The bulk of my time there was spent in the uphill *barangay* or village of Santa Lucia where the majority of the pilgrimage shrines are located, although I made frequent trips to the *bayan* or township as well. I passed the months amongst people with a variety of links to the mountain: townspeople, short and long-term pilgrims, villagers who reside in the barrios and hamlets in the vicinity of the shrines, urban middle class visitors who share Father Gorospe's view of Banahaw as a heritage site but do not exactly consider themselves to be pilgrims, and so on. Their perspectives on Mt. Banahaw, I soon came to feel, were often subtly at odds. At other times they overlapped or even directly challenged each other. The accounts of forest-clearing, coconut-planting and even cattle-rustling passed down over several generations within tenant farming families evoked images of the taming of a frontier which had little in common with the magical narratives presented by religious sects and spiritual leaders, depicting Mt. Banahaw as an enchanted realm of talking birds, singing stones and divine visitations. In the fifty-odd Banahaw-related feature articles I culled from the lifestyle sections of the Manila papers, I read of spiritual cleansing and the renewal of energy "chakras" brought about by bathing in Mt. Banahaw's Santa Lucia springs, while the *barangay* (village) mothers



whom I met bathing their babies at the same springs spoke instead of how rashes and wounds washed in the water healed quicker than if treated with antibiotics. And the accounts of the close-knit and pious village community of Santa Lucia which I encountered in sociological journals made no mention of the *shabu* (methamphetamine) dealing and strained tenancy relations that polarized the village, resulting in the periodic eruption of violent and drunken disputes between factions of unemployed men and youth on any flimsy pretext, from the distribution of municipal day-labor contracts to the ownership of fruit trees and fighting-cocks.

To be sure, any place which attracts a significant number of visitors is bound to exhibit such disjunctures between the perspectives of insiders and outsiders, and the sacred caves and springs of Mt. Banahaw draw well over 100,000 pilgrims, media-people and observers annually.<sup>4</sup> The social divisions between various categories of visitors and locals have been compounded by the rapid pace of change within the Banahaw region and the inscription and re-inscription of social meanings in the landscape during this period. For instance, a hundred years ago the difficult and inaccessible terrain of Mt. Banahaw as well as the region's relative proximity to Manila made its disorderliness a visible thorn in the side of the official institutions of church and state. Today, that same proximity makes it a logical destination for the city-

---

<sup>4</sup>The volume of pilgrims seems to have fluctuated substantially over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the municipality does not keep historical data on the number of visitors arriving during Holy Week, local residents say that it has doubled in the past ten to fifteen years. A magazine report dating from 1959 notes the presence of only a handful of visitors during Holy Week in Dolores, comparing it to the situation a half-century previously when every Easter saw thousands of "Colorums" amassing on the outskirts of the town. If this report is accurate, it would appear that the Mt. Banahaw pilgrimage attracted several thousand pilgrims at the turn of the 20th century before waning to a mid-century low and then experiencing a resurgence in recent decades. See Anon., "The Ghost Town of Dolores," *Orient* 1959, 65.

dwelling middle classes who wish to taste alternative ways of life in a setting whose rural ambience makes it seem culturally if not geographically remote.

Indeed, the growth in prominence of the Banahaw pilgrimage tradition must be seen against an eventful backdrop of shifting relations between church, state and society. As I have already mentioned, a hundred and fifty years ago the Banahaw region was a lawless bandit-infested frontier of civil administration, and a thorn in the side of the Spanish colonial authorities. As Spanish colonial authority gave way to U.S. imperialism in 1898 and then to the independent Philippine national state in 1946, the expansion of local government functions and of the bureaucratic-administrative state apparatus has effectively domesticated this frontier. (As local villagers describe it, since the days of their great-grandparents the mountain has been "tamed.") Today every inch of Mt. Banahaw has been surveyed and mapped, its jurisdiction divided between eleven municipalities and three state bodies, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) and the National Power Corporation (Napocor).

An equally major transformation in the acceptability of the pilgrimage from an official religious standpoint seems to have occurred over the course of the twentieth century. Parish documents from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century suggest that priests considered Filipinos' attribution of sacredness to particular sites on the mountain to be a dangerous and possibly heretical form of superstition. Even thirty years ago, the Catholic parish priests of Dolores discouraged parishioners from visiting Mt. Banahaw's shrines and springs by threatening to withhold the sacraments from those who disobeyed. But today some of the most effective recent publicists and promoters of Mt. Banahaw have ironically come from elite Jesuit-run schools and universities like the Ateneo in Manila, if not from within the Church itself (see Marasigan 1993;

Bulatao 1992; Gorospe 1992; Pesigan 1992).

On the other hand, the townspeople of Dolores, particularly those who belong to the provincial gentry (or what used to be known as the *principalia* class) find both the locality's historical image as the haunt of bandits and cattle rustlers as well as the contemporary presence of religious sects in Santa Lucia, three kilometers up the hill to be something of an embarrassment. Residents of the *bayán* or town wish to be viewed as sober, orthodox churchgoers and many of them downplay any association with charismatic sects or the natural shrines, which they generally regard as "fanatical" and "superstitious." When I asked townsfolk whether they had been to the cave of the Mother of Mercy or the peak of Calvary, two of the famous shrines on the Mt. Banahaw pilgrimage circuit, they usually replied (regardless of their age): "Oh yes, of course, but only when we were *young*," as if to imply that such activities, permissible as part of carefree youthful exploration, would be pointless or even unseemly in adulthood. An additional factor at issue here is a long-standing hierarchical distance between the town-based gentry and the peasantry in the outlying villages. While people from the *bukid* (countryside) or *bundok* (hills), as the outlying areas are often called, come to the *bayán* frequently to shop, sell their produce, visit the municipal offices or see their wealthier kin or patrons, residents of the *bayán* rarely head up the hill. Many of the families living in town consider themselves to be more urbane, more modern, even more "civilized" (*civilisado*) than people from the *barangays*. Nevertheless, the demands of politeness and kinship are such that they try not to show this openly, for nearly every household in town has a significant network of kin and affines living in the uphill *barangays*. In addition, town-dwellers regard the members and leadership of the religious sects in the upland *barangays* as rank outsiders, sometimes even as charlatans who crave attention from urban visitors and the media and will do anything to get it.

Indeed, residents of Dolores rather resent the high cultural profile of Mt. Banahaw and tend to distance themselves when they can from the people and events transpiring *sa bundok*— “up on the mountain”— a phrase which is redolent of centuries of the pseudo-feudal contempt in which the town-dwelling, *principalia* with their “Spanish manners” (*ugaling Kastila*) held their social inferiors who labored in remote fields and forests far from civilizing Hispanic influences.

Part of the reason for the townspeoples’ sense of pique is that they feel unjustly snubbed by the prominent leaders of Santa Lucia’s religious sects. As minor national celebrities who are frequently profiled in the mass-media, preside over their own compounds, and attract large groups of followers from outside the locality, sect leaders have little stake in maintaining cordial relations with the gentry of Dolores, let alone in showing them the deference that the town *principalia* are accustomed to receiving from villagers. Moreover, these spiritual leaders— of whom the most prominent are Isabel Suarez of Ciudad Mistica, Mama Rose of Camara Baja and Jose Ilustre of Tatlong Persona Solo Dyos (Three Persons, One God)— have superseded locality by positioning themselves within the narrative framework of nationalist historiography. Each of these sects traces its origins to a founder-leader, typically a bandit or outlaw (*tulisan* or *insurrecto*) from outside the locality who was drawn by the force of circumstance to Mt. Banahaw. The foundation-myths of these groups are remarkably similar in the following respect: at Mt. Banahaw, divine communication in the form of a holy voice separately led these founder-outlaws to abandon their prior lives and to become ascetic hermits in the forest, returning to the beliefs and rituals of their pre-colonial ancestors (although, as I discuss in a later chapter, in doing so they by no means rejected Christianity). Spiritual potency acquired through divine revelation and ascetic discipline gave these hermits not only knowledge of the fate of the

revolutionary struggles transpiring in the Philippines, but also insight into God's plan for the world. For instance, the Ciudad Mistica group teaches that the end of the world will coincide with cataclysmic floods, killing all but those who seek sanctuary within the Mistica Church. On the Judgement Day that will proceed shortly thereafter, Mt. Banahaw's peak will crack open and a golden flag will emerge. The Philippines, as God's chosen country, will rise to world sovereignty and an earthly paradise will begin (Quibuyen 1991).

Even the Philippine state and its enemies have been unable to resist drawing upon the significance of Mt. Banahaw in Filipino national historical memory, at least in their naming practices. For instance, during the 1970s and 1980s, the media portrayed (most likely in exaggerated terms) Dolores as a stronghold of the Maoist insurgent New People's Army, which named one of its most prominent guerilla units the "Banahaw Command". In christening one of its most high-profile units after Mt. Banahaw, it appears that the NPA were deliberately appropriating the mantle of Spanish-era *tulisanes* or bandit-outlaws, perhaps in anticipation of a future moment of revolutionary triumph which would bring them popular recognition as true Filipino patriots.<sup>5</sup> Quite possibly in attempt to undercut whatever mystique the NPA might derive from its "Banahaw" connection, the Philippine army recently gave its counter-insurgency initiative the name of "Task Force Banahaw." Despite the locally-specific

---

<sup>5</sup>If so, the strategy appears to have first worked and then backfired. With the erosion of the popular legitimacy enjoyed during the 1970s and 1980s, the morale of the NPA is said to be at an all-time low. While the existence of ties between NPA leadership and Philippine organized crime bosses has been known about for decades, it is only relatively recently that its cadres have been widely implicated in hired murders, kidnaps, armed robberies, assassinations and other unedifying extra-revolutionary activities. Indeed, after having been perceived as true patriots for an impressive length of time, the NPA are now in danger of being dismissed as mere *tulisanes*.

jurisdictions suggested by their names, both the Banahaw Command and Task Force Banahaw operate on a national scale and are by no means confined to the region of Mt. Banahaw itself-- indeed, while the NPA did enjoy some support in a few barangays of Dolores and other nearby townships in the late 1980s, the still-unsolved kidnaping of the town's police chief in 1999 by NPA goons has turned local public opinion against the movement. The use of the name "Banahaw" by both the insurgents and the counter-insurgents is thus more a rhetorical flourish than a reference to a specific geographical theater of operations or support base. However the fact that both state agents and detractors draw on the signifier "Banahaw" in support of the patriotic legitimacy of their respective uses of armed force only serves to further unsettle the ambiguous relationship between banditry and patriotism in national history.

Throughout this thesis, I will explore these and other disjunctures amongst the perspectives of visiting pilgrims and resident devotees, town-dwellers, villagers and middle-class Manileños at Mt. Banahaw. In my view, these divergences do not simply index social differentiation but also illuminate the uneven effects of historical processes such as modernization, state development and secularization which have transformed not just the Mt. Banahaw region but Philippine society as a whole. Such disjunctures offer potential avenues for the ethnographic exploration of Philippine postcolonial modernity, which, like all modernities incorporate "multiple temporalities"-- the unresolved legacies of previous time-periods and modes of life -- even as they replace old social and cultural forms with new ones.<sup>6</sup> Not incidentally, ethnography itself produces knowledge out of exacerbating and reflecting upon disjuncture-- the

---

<sup>6</sup>See Benjamin 1969, Nora 1993, and Huyssen 1995 for three influential explorations of the idea that modernity characteristically produces hybrid forms of temporal consciousness.

disjuncture in this case lying between the assumptions and expectations of the anthropologist and the reality with which she is confronted. It is hardly surprising then that from the beginning of my fieldwork onwards, I felt a particular fascination at moments when acknowledged or unacknowledged incongruities emerged amongst the perspectives of my variously-positioned informants at Mt. Banahaw. With the passage of time, the conclusion of my fieldwork and the enforced distance brought by dissertation writing, my belief in the significance of such moments has not diminished. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate in this thesis, diagnosing and contextualizing disjuncture is crucial to understanding the postcolonial politics of Filipino culture in general.

#### Culture, Locality and Strategies of Place-Making

The above vignettes, drawn from face-to-face interactions and mass-mediated reports, illustrate the plural and complex nature of what two influential anthropologists have recently termed “processes and practices of place-making”. In their recent assessment of new directions in the practice of ethnography, Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 1-32) enumerate various reasons for the demise of anthropology’s long-standing assumption of a world composed of discrete, territorialized cultures. Amidst empirical challenges from the deterritorializing forces of globalization on the one hand, and the internal challenge to the narrative conventions of anthropological representation on the other, the fault-lines inhering within the concept of “culture” itself are increasingly becoming manifest. Not only do the movements of people, capital and commodities across regional and state boundaries confound attempts to posit primordial associations between social groups and territories, but heightened interest in pluralism, contestation and the idiosyncracies of individual subjectivity have rendered

the familiar notion of culture as “the shared, the agreed-upon and the orderly” both descriptively and analytically unsatisfactory.

According to the same authors, the first step towards reformulating ethnographic practice in light of these developments is to regard “all associations of place, people, and culture [as] social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts” (4). Localities are therefore formed in relation to wider regional, national or supranational entities. But in a departure from the majority of political-economic accounts to date, the “local” community is not assumed to possess its own autochthonous self-sufficiency prior to penetration by “global” forces; rather, the local and the supra-local are seen as dialectically intertwined from the very beginning. But this shift away from territorially discrete cultural wholes also calls for the rejection of under-theorized notions of the “individual”-- hitherto assumed to be the bearer and enactor of “culture”-- in favor of a more dialectically notion of the “subject” as a social agent constituted within power relations which permeate society and give rise to circumstances that are alternately (or even simultaneously) constraining and enabling (Foucault 1979, 1980). As a result, while the term “culture” is by no means rendered obsolete, it loses its privileged status as the object of anthropological study-- indeed, depending on the specific circumstances at hand, “ideology” or “hegemony” may prove to be more useful conceptual tools in investigating the politically contested meanings and contingent actions of “subjects” than “culture,” with its too-general connotation of a way of life, its too-specific sense of refined or elite accomplishments, and its now-problematic implications of uncontentious and shared meaning.

For a demonstration of the value of these methodological developments currently afoot in anthropology, let us return to the fractured yet overlapping perceptions of Mt. Banahaw’s past history and present significance to which we have